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25 March 2012

Mr. Greg Wall
Chairman
Social Business Australia &
National IYC Steering Committee
c/o Capricorn House
Locked Mailbag 436
Victoria Park WA 6979

Dear Mr. Wall

I write to express the concern of Co-operatives Victoria that the registration fees for the National Co-operative Conference 24-26 October 2012 will prevent the participation of many co-operatives and co-operators and will, therefore, significantly reduce the representative nature of the conference. This is particularly disappointing in the International Year of Co-operatives 2012 which has a priority of bringing co-operatives and co-operators together - rather than dividing the co-operative movement based on capacity and willingness to pay. It would not be a good look for our sector if the National Co-operative Conference was attended ONLY by the several dozen large co-operatives with adequate resources. An attendee from Melbourne will have little change from \$2,000 after conference fee, economy air travel and accomodation.

It is appreciated, of course, that the conference has to pay for itself and that a judgement has to be made on what level of fee is necessary to achieve this objective and that it is difficult to set a reasonable fee without knowing the number of actual participants until registrations close. It is also appreciated that contributions to the IYC 2012 Industry Appeal have been insufficient to enable any subsidisation of conference participation.

We understand that the IYC 2012 National Steering Committee meeting on the 21 March 2012 did consider the possibility of introducing a surcharge to provide a level of subsidisation but that there was no decision on the level and whether would impact on who could participate. It is our view that the registration fees should be at least 50% below the current proposed fees to facilitate a more representative participation and that equity considerations would suggest that registration fees should be based on the size and capacity of co-operatives as is the annual subscription membership charges of State Federations. This is also a common practice in the community services sector which is conscious of differing capacity of organisations. Fees can also be determined by sponsorship income and a higher level of required sponsorship income would enable a more representative participation through subsidised or differing levels of registration fees.

A balance needs to be struck between achieving a 'profit' and maximising participation in the conference. It is regrettable, that to date the former has prevailed without

consideration of the latter and that this is extremely regrettable. In achieving this balance, it is imperative to consider the 6th co-operative principle.

6th Principle: Co-operation among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

I would urge a response within a fortnight as it is our intention to, then, widely circulate this letter and widely publish these concerns on various web sites.

Yours in co-operation

Tony O'Shea
Chairman